Islamic Work at Home

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INTRODUCTION

Praise be to Allah; we praise Him, seek His forgiveness, and turn to Him in repentance. We seek refuge with Him from the evils of our souls and the evils of our deeds. Whomever Allah guides, none can misguide, and whomever Allah leads astray, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah alone without partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.

"O you who believe! Fear Allah and let every soul regard what it has sent forth for tomorrow. Fear Allah, for Allah is well acquainted with what you do." [*Sûrah al-Hashr*: 18]

O people! Fear your Lord who created you from a single soul and created from it its mate and scattered forth from them numerous men and women. Fear Allah through whom, and through your ties of kinship, you demand from each other your rights. Truly Allah is watching over you." [*Sûrah al-Nisâ'*: 1]

O you who believe! Fear Allah and speak a just word. He will rectify your works and forgive you your sins. Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has attained a great victory." [*Sûrah al-Ahzâb*: 70-71]

The topic of this short treatise – Islamic work at home – is an important one. It is a topic that Islamic workers need to address and people of all walks of life need to hear about. This is because every family requires a home of some sort within which to reside. This home, conversely, embraces within it a full cross-section of society. It contains parents, small children, and mature adults both male and female. The home is a full-fledged institution. It is the smaller institution upon which society as a whole is built.

If we look at the societies that exist and have existed throughout the world, we find that some of the institutions commonly associated with civil existence may not be present. There have been societies without schools, for instance, and societies without industry, and even societies without government. On the other hand, there has never been a society on Earth without homes in which families could take comfort. It does not matter whether the society is rich or poor, large or small, Muslim or non-Muslim. Families dwell in homes and homes exist in all human societies. An institution of such pervasive and universal importance warrants our attention.

The Home in Islamic Law:

One way to appreciate the importance of the home in Islam is by taking a look at some of the rulings that Islamic Law has set down for it.

1. It is forbidden to enter someone's house without first seeking the permission if its inhabitants. Allah says: "O you who believe! Do not enter the homes of others before seeking permission and greeting their inhabitants." [*Sûrah al-Nûr*: 27]

It is not permitted to enter anyone's home without first asking and then being granted permission. The law goes even further than that. It strictly prohibits even looking into others' homes. Once the Prophet (peace be upon him) was in his home combing his hair. A man stood outside peering in at him. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) noticed him, he said: "If I had known you were peeping in at me, I would have stuck you in the eye with my comb. The only reason it is obligatory to seek permission before entering is for the sake of the eyes."[1] The Islamic ruling here is quite stern. It is lawful for the person within the home to pierce the eye of the one who peers in upon him, and he will not have to pay the voyeur any compensation for the loss of the eye. The reason for this is that, by peeping into another's private home, he forfeits the right to legal compensation.

2. Islamic Law places great emphasis on the rights of one's neighbors. This is evidenced by the number of legal rulings that outline these rights. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The angel Gabriel continued to enjoin on me the rights of the neighbor until I began to suspect that they would be added to the list of heirs."[2]

3. Voluntary prayers are supposed to be performed at home. Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) used to order the Muslims to make these prayers in their houses. He said: "Perform some of your prayers at home. Do not turn your houses into graveyards."[3] He also said: "The best prayers a person can pray, aside from the prescribed prayers, are the prayers that he prays at home."[4]

Praying at home provides those who do so with the following benefits:

1. It safeguards the worshipper from his inclination to show off to others.
2. It provides a good example for the other members of the household.
3. It keeps Satan away from the home by fostering within it an environment of Allah's remembrance and prayer.

When prayers are performed at home, it makes the home almost like a mosque. When prayers at home are neglected, the home becomes more like a graveyard where Islamic Law forbids the performance of prayers.

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[1] *Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (6392). *Sahîh Muslim* (4013).
[2] *Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (5556). *Sahîh Muslim* (4757).
[3] *Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (414, 1114). *Sahîh Muslim* (1296).
[4] *Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (689). *Sahîh Muslim* (1301).

How much worse is it, then, when our homes become venues for sin and vice and provide opportunities for the basest of deeds? Such homes are worse than graveyards. They are more akin to brothels.

CHAPTER ONE
Calling to Allah at Home

Islam has vested the home with a special honor and distinction. It has made it incumbent upon us to call the people in our homes to Allah. If we could just convince the people to take care of their affairs at home and direct their Islamic call efforts homeward, we would see wonders.

If the strongest and wealthiest nation on Earth wanted to mobilize an army of missionaries to promote a given idea or principle, it would manage to mobilize many thousands of people at most. If, on the other hand, we were able to convince every religious Muslim to just carry out the duty of calling to Islam within his own home, imagine what the result would be. It would be a case where millions of people would be mobilized for Islamic work without any monetary compensation being offered.

What is more, you have mobilized a force capable of penetrating into the home. An Islamic worker might normally speak to people at a mosque, Islamic center, or public square. He does not usually have direct access to people in the privacy of their homes. Even if he could get such access, he would rarely have the same impact that a member of that household would have.

My dear reader, you are one of the elements that make up your household along with your father, your mother, your brothers and sisters, and possibly a husband, a wife, or children. These are the people with whom you have the strongest bonds and the closest relationships. This is why you are able to accomplish with these people what you are unable to accomplish with anyone else. So do not wait around for others to come into your home and get to know your family, so they can call them to Allah in your stead.

Islam Starts at Home

Today, thanks to Allah, we find people are returning to Islam in startling numbers. This brings joy to the hearts of the believers. Whenever we speak of this awakening, it makes us happy to think how Allah is assisting Islam in our day and time at the hands of the believers. May Allah increase them in guidance.

As for the enemies of Islam, they are speaking hastily like people who have been surprised by something they were never expecting. The centers of power in the West pass resolution after resolution that spell out the dangers of the Islamic awakening and the importance of counteracting it.

This blessed awakening has brought about a desire in many of our young people to see Islam grow strong again. They wish to see Islam govern their lives, their wealth, and their honor. They want to see it return to the strength that it once enjoyed These precious hopes are in all of our hearts.

As Muslims, we are all acquainted with these hopes and aspirations. We look toward the goal of rebuilding Islam, establishing it on Earth, and spreading it throughout the world. The question that we must ask ourselves is how we are going to get started.

As the saying goes: a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. What then is our first step? The answer to this question is that once a person has resolved to do Islamic work, the first step for him is to deal with his own home.

The Way of the Companions

It is sad to see some of our young men and women hoping to change the world when they cannot even change the conditions within their own homes. How can a person who is unable fulfill such a small trust hope to carry the burden of the greatest trust of all?

The Companions, like Abû Bakr, `Umar, `Uthmân, `Alî, Salmân, Bilâl, `Ammâr, and Suhayb, were dreaming to see Islam victorious while they were suffering the most brutal persecution in Mecca. They remained patient and steadfast until Allah gave them victory. All the while, they were cognizant of the fact that the victory for Islam would start at home.

If we look at the life of Abû Bakr, we see that his children were among the Muslims. They believed in the Messenger (peace be upon him) and fought for Islam. We should keep in mind the role that his sons and daughters played during the Emigration.

We should also look at `Umar's son `Abd Allah b. `Umar, who had been a candidate for the *Khilafah* after the time of the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

We have the children of `Alî to consider as well – al-Hasan and al-Husayn – whom the Prophet (peace be upon him) declared to be the leaders of the youth of Paradise.

We should also consider the household of al-Zubayr. His children, most exceptionally `Abd Allah b. Zubayr, grew up in Islam and went on to make great sacrifices for the faith.

The same can be said for the other Companions. Each of their households was a nursery for proper Islamic upbringing. Each of these nurseries produced great people for Islam. They formed its armies and its leaders and at their hands Allah established Islam.

CHAPTER TWO
Duties to be Carried Out at Home

There are three fundamental duties that must be carried out within each and every household. We will discuss each of them in turn:

The First Duty: Providing for the Needs of the Household

The worldly needs of the household must be met. We should not think that a religious young man in the house will spend all his time with other Muslim brothers traveling around, going to the Islamic center, or attending religious classes or that he will devote all his time to personal activities like reading, reciting the *Qur'ân*, listening to recorded lectures, or sleeping, and have nothing whatsoever to do with the rest of the household. Who, then, will purchase the household's needs? Who will take the members of the family to the places where they have to go? Who will entertain the guests? Who will pick up so-and-so from the airport? Should the religious member of the family be the one to say: "Sorry. I have no time. I am busy!"?

This religious young man has failed to carry out his proper role. Therefore, someone else will have to be the one to carry it out. That someone else may be deficient in his religion, but because he is the one taking care of the needs of the household, he is going to be the one to have the greatest influence. His words will be heeded and his commands obeyed. His opinions will carry weight. As for the religious young man, his word will carry no weight whatsoever, since he never does anything to benefit anyone else.

Sometimes the situation is even worse than this. There are cases where the religious man does not leave the affairs of the household to his brother but to a servant or the driver. The driver takes the girls to school and to the shops. This stranger, then, is the one who stays with them for hours on end in the car or at the shopping center.

This is one of the grave mistakes that some of our religious people fall into.

Serving the members of one's family is the best way to influence them. A religious young man should safeguard his family from having to leave the home too much. He should take care of their needs himself. He should go to the shop for them. He can scarcely prevent the women of his household from going to the shop and then fail to go on their behalf because he is "too busy". His home is not some hotel where he goes to sleep, eat, and drink. It is definitely not his place to do nothing but act like an emperor, ordering others around and piling on prohibitions without providing any alternatives.

If you want to be listened to, then you have to expend some time and effort to make sure that your household's needs are met. You must take the time to get the things that they need and take them where they need to go.

We can say the same to our pious sisters, since some of our religious young women do not carry out the housework that is required of them. A sister might excuse herself from

her chores with the excuse that she is reading the *Qur'ân* or listening to a taped lecture. Then she wonders how she can have a positive affect on the other members of her household and put an end to the evil behaviors that they exhibit.

In order to be able to fight against the sinful behavior that go on in the home and effect reform, you must first build up your own position within your household by serving your family and catering to their needs. Do not make yourself invisible. Make your presence known by doing things for others.

Some of our young, religious people flee from their homes in one way or another after becoming religious. They feel that they cannot bear staying at home surrounded by sin.

Some of them think that they can escape by going for jihad. They often fail to take heed of the Islamic Legal considerations surrounding such a grave decision that can easily result in their death. Some young men plainly admit that they want to commit suicide and see jihad as an Islamically lawful way of doing so!

Others seek to escape by going overseas to study or by simply moving away from home. There are often clear signs in their behavior that they are merely running away. Some of them leave home without their parents' permission. They even go to jihad without their parents' approval. They forget that when a man asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) if he could go for jihad, the Prophet (peace be upon him) immediately asked him if his parents were alive. When he said that they were, the Prophet said: "Your jihad is to take care of your parents!"[5] They also forget that when another young man approached the Prophet (peace be upon him) to go for jihad, the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked him if his mother was alive. When he found out that she was, he told the man: "Woe unto you! Attend her at her feet and you will attain Paradise."[6] So, if we want Paradise, the quickest way to get there is by honoring our mothers.

During the reign of `Umar b. al-Khattâb, a young man named Kullâb went to jihad in Syria with the army of Yazîd b. Abî Sufyân. The boy's father approached `Umar and appealed to him in poetic verse about how his son had abandoned his father and mother. `Umar asked him what was going on and the old man said: "He left for Syria and abandoned his two elderly parents." Upon hearing this, `Umar shed tears and promptly wrote to Yazîd ordering the young man to be returned with all of his possessions to `Umar.

When the man arrived, `Umar asked him: "So you are Kullâb?" Then he said to him: "Go to your parents and honor them, and stay with them until they die."[7]

Though jihad is one of the most honorable deeds there is in Islam, it requires the express permission of one's parents. Without this permission, it is forbidden to go except in cases where jihad becomes mandatory on the individual.

[5] *Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (2728). *Sahîh Muslim* (4623).
[6] *Sunan Ibn Mâjah* (2771). The *hadîth* is authentic (*sahîh*).
[7] Ibn `Asâkir, *Târîkh Dimashq* (50/270, 276).

Sometimes a person is unable to deal with the struggle on the home front. Such a person is definitely not going to be able to engage in the struggle far from home. How can a person who cannot even cope with his duties in his own home think he can assume duties affecting the entire Muslim nation?

His first duty is to establish himself by fulfilling his responsibilities to his family. He should struggle to stay at home no matter how trying the circumstances are and do his best to make things right.

The Second Duty: Providing Education, Direction, and Leadership

A person's closest relatives are his primary concern and they are the first ones entitled to his good treatment. There can be no doubt that calling them to what is right is part of this good treatment to which they are entitled.

Allah says, addressing the Prophet (peace be upon him): "And admonish your nearest kinsmen." [*Sûrah al-Shu`arâ'*: 214] After this verse was revealed, the Prophet (peace be upon him) gathered his kinfolk together and said: "O assembly of Quraysh! Purchase your own souls, for I can avail you naught with Allah. O Banû `Abd Manâf! I can avail you naught with Allah! O Safiyyah, aunt of Allah's Messenger! I can avail you naught with Allah! O Fâtimah, daughter of Muhammad! I can avail you naught with Allah. Ask me of my wealth what you wish, but I can avail you naught with Allah!"[8]

Your close relatives have more right than others that you call them to Allah. It is wrong to call others to Islam and leave your family wallowing in deviance and iniquity. You must start your efforts at home and give guidance to the members of your household. There are many ways to do this.

The first is education. You should start a study circle at home. This is in accordance with the *Sunnah*. The women had approached the Prophet (peace be upon him) one day and said: "The men are taking up all your time. Give us a day to teach us." He promised them that he would do so. During one of these lessons, he exhorted them, saying: "If a woman has three children and they all die, they will be a barrier between her and the Fire." A woman asked about two children, and he said: "And two as well."[9] In one narration, it is mentioned that another woman spoke up and asked: "What about one child?" to which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'And even one."[10]

We can see from this *hadîth* that the Prophet (peace be upon him) set a specific day aside where he would instruct the women. Al-Bukhârî places this *hadîth* under the heading: "Chapter: Should women be given a special day of their own for study?" We should also take note of the fact that when the Prophet (peace be upon him) spoke to the women, he informed them of matters that they needed to hear about. Therefore, we must strive to give to the members of our households guidance that is relevant to their needs.

[8] *Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (2548). *Sahîh Muslim* (305).
[9] *Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (99). *Sahîh Muslim* (4768).
[10] Al-Tabarânî, *al-Mu`jam al-Awsat* (2489).

Some practical steps that can be taken:

1. Put together a small library in your home containing books and articles that address the needs of the men, women, and children in your household. You should also have some Islamic storybooks for small children. You should get a few Islamic history books and inspirational works. You need to make the library well-rounded and accessible to the various members of the household, so they will use it and through it become predisposed to accepting what is right.

2. Beside this print library you should provide a small audio library containing recorded lectures, Islamic songs, and sermons for all the members of the household. There should be some lectures dealing with Islamic laws and the performance of acts of worship and some that deal exclusively with women's issues. You should also draw up a program to help the members of your household benefit from these two libraries.

3. It is essential that that each one of us establishes a class at home, at least once a week, for all of the family. It should include *Qur'ân* memorization, *hadîth* memorization, a question-and-answer session, instruction on how to correctly perform acts of worship, and something to soften the hearts. In this way you can have an impact on the household and teach them what they need.

Another way of providing guidance is by enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and exhorting to righteousness. We should do this in the way it was done by the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Once the Prophet (peace be upon him) passed by a woman who was weeping at a grave. He said to her: "Fear Allah and have patience."

She replied, not realizing who had spoken to her: "Leave me alone. You have not been stricken with what has befallen me, and you did not know him."

Later on, she was told that it was the Prophet (peace be upon him) who had spoken to her. She went to the door of the Prophet and found no one guarding the door. She saw the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: "I did not realize who you were."

He replied: "The time for patience is when the crisis first occurs."[11]

Here, the Prophet (peace be upon him) first enjoined what is right by calling her to patience and to fearing Allah. Then he responded to her by informing her that she should be patient when a crisis first befalls her. This is how the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught his Companions to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. Whenever he saw something wrong, he would gently point it out while exhorting them to goodness, offering guidance, and reminding them about Allah.

[11] *Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (1203).

This is not a time to show your strength and authority, but a time to reach out and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong while giving a reminder about Allah. We are supposed to awaken the hearts of the people in the household and instill in those hearts the fear and love of Allah and a desire to please Him and attain Paradise. This requires from us an approach that will inspire faith.

The Third Duty: Watching Over and Monitoring the Affairs of Your Household

This duty follows after the other two. It is a level that you and your family have to reach. However, when this level is reached, you will be able to monitor the family's affairs and hold them accountable for their errors.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) carried out this function admirably. `Abd Allah b. `Amr relates the following:

We were walking with Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) when he noticed a woman a distance off whom he could not recognize. When we approached her, it turned out that she was his daughter Fâtimah. He asked her: "Fâtimah, what made you come out of the house?"

"I came to visit the family of the deceased so I might comfort and console them."

He said: "Perhaps you went with them to the graves?"

She replied: "May Allah protect me that I would do such a thing after hearing you say about it what you said."

He said to her: "If you had reached the graves with them, you would not see Paradise until after your great grandfather did."[12]

Of course, her great grandfather was an unbeliever. The point here is that the Prophet (peace be upon him) inquired from her as to what she was doing out of the house.

Once the Prophet (peace be upon him) went to Fâtimah's house and did not find `Alî at home, so he asked her where he was. We had a disagreement and he made me angry, so he left and did not take his afternoon rest at home."

The Prophet (peace be upon him) then instructed someone to find out where he was. The man returned and informed him that `Alî was reclining in the mosque. Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) went to the mosque and found `Alî lying down. His cloak had slipped from his shoulder and become soiled. Allah's Messenger began dusting it off and said: "Get up, O Abû Turâb. (Possessor of soil)." From that day on, Ali was very proud of that nickname, because the Prophet had given it to him.[13]

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[12] *Sunan al-Nasâ'î* (1857). *Sunan Abî Dâwûd* (2716). *Musnad Ahmad* (6286).
[13] *Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (422). *Sahîh Muslim* (4426).

`Â'ishah relates the following:

When it was my turn for Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) to spend the night with me, he turned on his side, took off his cloak and removed his shoes and placed them near his feet. He spread the edge of his garment on his bed and then reclined upon it until he thought that I had gone to sleep. Then, he took hold of his cloak and slowly put it on. He did the same with his shoes. Then he opened the door and went out, closing it lightly. I covered my head, put on my veil and bound my garments. Then I went out, following his footsteps until he reached the graveyard. He stood there for a long time. Then he lifted his hands three times. Then he departed and so did I. He walked quickly and so did I. Then he began to run and so did I. I managed to get back home before he did and lay down on the bed. He came in and asked me: "Why, O `Â'ishah, are you out of breath?"

I said: "It is nothing."

He said: "Tell me or the Subtle and All-Aware would inform me."

I said: "O Messenger of Allah, may my father and mother be ransomed for you." Then I told him the whole story.

He said: So you were the dark form that I saw in front of me?"

I said: "Yes."

He thumped me on the chest which caused me some discomfort, and said: "Did you think that Allah and His Apostle would deal unjustly with you?"

I said: "Whatsoever the people conceal, Allah will know it."

He said: "Gabriel came to me when you saw me. He called me and he concealed himself from you. I responded to his call, but I too concealed it from you. He would not enter while you were not fully dressed. I thought that you had gone to sleep, and I did not want to wake you up, fearing that you may be startled. Gabriel then told me: 'Your Lord has commanded you to go to the inhabitants of the graves and seek forgiveness for them.'"[14]

We should consider all the questions that Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) asked `Â'ishah. Then he informed her that what she was worried about could never take place and informed her of the reason why he did what he did." `Â'ishah relates to us many other interesting incidents.

[14] Sahîh Muslim (1619).

The reason for mentioning these stories is to illustrate how Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) used to keep track of his family's doings. He commanded us to do the same with those under our care.

CHAPTER THREE
Influences on Our Homes

The home today is permeated with numerous influences. Some of them are within the home and others are outside of it. It is very important that we make ourselves aware of these influences. Let us take a look at some of them:

The School

The home is not the only place were our daughters are brought up. There is another institution that shares in this. The school has a marked influence. We need to ask ourselves what affect the schools have on our daughters.

We can only answer this question if we open our eyes and take a good look at what our daughters bring home with them from school. Do they come home with correct knowledge, good manners, and reverence for Allah or do these qualities diminish day by day?

It is wrong for us to place our children in any school and then say to ourselves that our children are in good hands. We better make certain that we are, in fact, placing them in good hands. Even when we are confident that the school is a good one, we cannot forget the role that we have to play at that school.

Friends

Our daughters will invariably have a group of friends who they hang out with at school and elsewhere. They often form strong relationships with each other and spend a lot of time together. These friends might be good, but even then we must be careful that they are not being led by one girl who is less than virtuous and who can spoil the lot.

There are horror stories that I can relate to you that you will find hard to believe and these stories concern girls not in High School, but in Middle School. Girls at this age are very naïve and impressionable. Their hearts are essentially pure. There can, however, be a girl among them who is bad and at the same time possesses a strong personality. Such a girl can lead a lot of others astray.

The same can be said for boys. Friends and peers are among the strongest influences a child can have and it is the duty of parents to keep track of them. Parents must know who their children's friends are.

The Phone

This is a serious threat within the home. There is scarcely a home – scarcely a room in the home these days – that is without a telephone.

Many people who have no fear of Allah use the phone for insidious purposes. Almost every crime committed in our society relies on a phone some time during its execution.

Sometimes it starts as a prank or as a means of wasting time. This leads to a meeting and then to more illicit things. One thing leads to another. A poet long ago observed:

A glance, a smile, a friendly hello,
Some chatting, a date, then off they go!

We must, therefore, instill in our children what will fortify them. We must teach them to eschew vain and idle behavior. We must make them averse to misusing the phone.

It is a betrayal of the trust placed upon us as parents to be lax in this matter. A man is the shepherd of his household and he is responsible for his flock.

The Mall

The mall is an open environment where all kinds of people mingle. Some are there to buy, some to sell, and some are there for other purposes. Young women especially are exposed to being enticed and misused in such places if they are not carefully supervised.

If a man lets his wife, sister, or daughter spend hours alone at such places, mixing with the merchants, customers, and loiterers, then she is going to give and receive glances and she might receive some illicit propositions. Consider how dangerous such a situation can be. Consider what temptations she is being exposed to. A shepherd who lets his flock stray into the wilderness and then takes a nap can expect the lions to get at his sheep.

CONCLUSION

All that has just been said brings us to the inevitable conclusion that the home is of paramount importance. If we succeed in turning our young men and women into Islamic workers in their homes, we will achieve a lot. We will be able to reach into every house and have a positive effect on every member of the upcoming generation.

There are many ways to effect reform at home:

1. By establishing a presence at home through rendering services to the household.
2. By employing different methods of education, instruction, and guidance within the home.

3. By monitoring the members of the household under your care and protecting them without becoming suspicious, tiresome, or overbearing.

We ask Allah to let this short treatise help people in fulfilling their respective roles in their households. My purpose in writing it was for people to put what it says into practice. Today, there are many negative influences encroaching upon our homes and they are at work within our households in one way or another.

The singer whose voice is heard in our homes, the dancer, the speaker, the cassette, the book, the volume of poetry, the picture, and the magazine are all part of this conspiracy to influence us. None is safe from their ill effects except whom Allah protects.

We ask Allah to grant us all success in reforming our households and fulfilling the great trust that Allah has bestowed upon us. Allah knows best our affairs.

And may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon His servant and Messenger Muhammad and upon his family and Companions.